

COUNTY: EAST SUSSEX SITE NAME: ROCK WOOD

DISTRICT: WEALDEN

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Local Planning Authority: WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

National Grid Reference: TQ 471249 Area: 10.3 (ha.) 25.5 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 198 1:10,000: TQ 42 NE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): 1965 Date of Last Revision: 1979

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1985 Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:

Reasons for Notification:

Rock Wood is a small ancient woodland lying on Tunbridge Wells sandstone and Wadhurst Clay. A number of different broadleaved woodland types are represented, and there has been some underplanting with conifers. A small stream and its tributary have cut through the sandstone in places creating steep sided ghylls which contain various uncommon 'Atlantic' bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and ferns.

The western part of the site is predominantly hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* coppice, with scattered oak *Quercus robur* standards and some coppiced hazel *Corylus avellana*.

An ancient bank with hornbeam coppice marks the eastern edge of this type beyond which oak is the dominant tree, with holly *Ilex aquifolium*, and coppiced birch *Betula spp* and hazel. In the south-east beech *Fagus sylvatica* is co-dominant with oak. Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* is also present, while coppiced alder woodland occurs along the main stream. In the north spruce *Picea sp.*, Douglas fir *Pseudotsuga menziesii*, Scots pine *Pinus sylvestris* have been planted underneath the mixed broadleaved canopy.

Ground flora is sparse under the hornbeam coppice, beech and dense holly while under the oak and hornbeam bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, wood-sorrel *Oxalis acetosella* and dog's mercury *Mercurialis perennis* are found. Wild daffodil *Narcissus pseudonarcissus* and broad-leaved helleborine *Epipactis helleborine* are also recorded from Rock Wood.

The ghylls feature a small waterfall which has developed where the smaller stream flows over one of several sandstone outcrops occurring throughout the wood. These ghylls have a moist, mild microclimate which is suitable for a number of 'Atlantic' plant species uncommon in south-east England. These include the mosses *Tetraphis browniana* and *Diphyscium foliosum* and the liverwort *Marsupella emarginata*. Hay-

scented buckler fern *Dryopteris aemula* and Tunbridge filmy fern *Hymenophyllum tunbrigense* are also present on this site.